

THE MUSICAL WORLD

THE many lovers of German opera are prepared to give a warm welcome to the Damrosch Opera Company on its arrival in New York. The company, which includes some of the greatest living Wagnerian singers, will open in this city early in March. Although Mr. Damrosch's season here will last only three weeks, the repertoire will be very extensive, consisting of the following works: "Tristan and Isolde," "Die Walküre," "Siegfried," "Die Gotterdammerung," "Tannhäuser," "Die Meistersinger," "The Flying Dutchman," "Fidelio," "Der Freischütz," and Mr. Damrosch's new opera, "The Scarlet Letter," founded on Hawthorne's great romance. The libretto is by George Parsons Lathrop, son-in-law of the great novelist. Selections from the opera were heard at Carnegie Music Hall last winter, but the work has not as yet been presented here in its entirety.

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Experiments with Wagnerian opera have heretofore proved pecuniary failures. There seems to be no money in Wagner

168

—why, I do not know. I am not a blind worshipper at Wagner's shrine, but I must confess that the music of no other composer can touch the chords of my soul and make them vibrate as do some of the passages in "Tannhäuser" and "Meistersinger." Wagner's music and stories lift us from this mundane sphere into a fairy land where we get a glimpse of the ideal. The only drawback to Wagner presented on the stage, is the more than material aspect of some of the singers. Vocalists, both men and women, all run to girth in a most distressing manner, and German opera seems to be more fattening for the singers than any other. If we could only listen and not see!

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We shall hear once more in opera those great favorites, Max Alvary and Emil Fischer, and we shall make the acquaintance for the first time of singers who are strangers here, but who are of international fame. Among these are Frau Klafsky, of Hamburg, and Fraulein Ternina, of Munich, the two greatest dramatic sopranos in Ger-



Mme. Melba.



Calve.

many to-day; Fraulein Gadski, who was heard here last year and who became a great public favorite; Wilhelm Gruening, of Hamburg, one of the greatest exponents of heroic tenor rôles; Demeter Popovici, baritone, who won laurels in Bayreuth last summer, and Mr. Barron Berthald, the young tenor who is remarkable for his ability to sing such rôles as *Lohengrin* and *Walter* at a few minutes' notice.

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Frau Katharine Klafsky has the reputation of being as fine an actress as she is a singer. She is said to be as great an *Isolde* as Lilli Lehmann, if not greater, and this is high praise indeed. Frau Klafsky is an exceptionally handsome woman and is now in the prime of life. She is distinguished in person, and her profile might have been the model for the classic face pictured on our silver dollars. She recently married Herr Lohse, the musical composer and director of Hamburg.

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That other great dramatic soprano, Milka Ternina, rose to fame from absolutely nothing. She was born in an obscure country village in Germany. Her parents were miserably poor and the little Milka was adopted by an uncle who decided that, as the child had a pretty voice, it should be cultivated. At the age of twelve, she took her first singing lesson from Ida Winiberger, and it was her teacher who first awakened in Ternina her passion for the study of music, and who pointed out to her the heights she could reach by hard study and perseverance. Fraulein Ternina's great rôle is *Brünnhilde* in "*Die Walküre*," and while she possesses a remarkably extensive répertoire, European critics have declared her to be absolutely without a rival in the above-named rôle.

Wilhelm Gruening, the new tenor, like many celebrities of the operatic stage, began his vocal education under his father. He comes from Hamburg, and although still a very young man, is reported to be the superior even of Alvary in the Wagnerian rôles. He likewise is reputed to be an actor of rare ability, the part of *Tannhäuser* being his best.

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Walter Damrosch is too well known to need an introduction here. The son of an illustrious father, he has already done much to elevate the taste for music in this country while holding, for several years past, the responsible position of conductor of the Symphony Society, the foremost organization of its kind in this city. Eighteen months ago there was lively competition between Mr. Damrosch and Anton Seidl as to who was most capable of organiz-



Alvary as "Tannhäuser."



Katherine Klafsky as "Isolde."

ing and conducting a season of German opera. Mr. Damrosch succeeded in securing the support of the Wagnerites in this community, and he went to Europe to personally secure his present artists. Mr. Damrosch was married about five years ago to Margaret Blaine, a daughter of the late statesman, James G. Blaine.

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I wonder if it is generally known that Jean de Reszke, the eminent Polish tenor, is fifty-two. To judge from the vigor and ardent fervor with which he sings and acts one would not take him to be over thirty; but it is a cold, cruel fact that our ideal *Romeo* is already old enough to be a grandfather. A number of rumors have been circulated to the effect that Jean de Reszke is engaged to be married, but the singer has always laughingly denied it. As a

rule he avoids women's society. He has been so petted and spoiled during these years of his artistic triumphs that he has become surfeited with female adulation. He gets \$1,400 every time he sings, and he often sings three or four times a week. It is not surprising, therefore, that he has been able to accumulate a fortune which is invested in real estate and race-horses in Poland.

Accompanying the portrait of M. de Reszke, reproduced in this article, is an autograph written by him in the Polish language.

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One of the greatest triumphs of the present opera season has been won by Madame Nordica as *Isolde*. Nordica has never until now received from the public that attention and appreciation which her wonderful voice deserves. Her success in the great Wagnerian rôle is all the more satisfactory as Nordica is an American singer by



Gruening as "Tannhauser."



Walter Damrosch.

birth, although, of course, she received her musical education abroad. I say "of course" because, while we have excellent singing schools and instructors in this country, there is lacking here that art atmosphere, that constant incentive to achievement, the living examples of the best and highest in music, which are distinctive features of artistic life in European capitals.

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Nordica is stopping at the Savoy Hotel, and she recently gave a luncheon to Jean and Edouard de Reszke, Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Grau, Morris Bagby, Mr. and Mrs. Reginald de Koven, and Alexander Lambert. Out of compliment to her Polish guests the menu card was printed in the Polish language, so, of course, the other convives could only guess vaguely what they had eaten. Paderewski was invited, but he did not accept because his Man Friday, Herr Goelitz, had not been included. The famous pianist is a very shy man and refuses to go anywhere unless protected by his secretary, whose principal duty is to talk for him.

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A good story is told concerning Nordica. The day following her ap-

pearance in the rôle of *Isolde*, in which she made such a great success, all the New York papers rang with her praise, only one—a German paper—finding fault. Wishing her folks, who live in Germany, to read what the critics said, Nordica instructed her maid to send all the papers marked to Germany. A few days later, when the singer asked the girl if she had done so, she replied: "I only sent the German paper; I didn't think they would be able to understand the English papers."

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Reginald de Koven's new opera, which will be seen at the Herald Square Theatre next September, will be called "The Mandarin," the scene being laid in China. Harry B. Smith is writing the libretto. It is too bad that Mr. de



Ternina as "Brunhilde" in "Wakare"

Koven wastes his time trying to write music criticisms. He is a delightful composer, and it is a well-known fact that the brain which can create—and Mr. de Koven has certainly shown us

has been released by M. Carvalho and will remain with the Abbey and Grau Italian Opera Company until the close of the season. This bit of news will give great satisfaction both to those



Mme. Saville as "Juliet."

that he has the creative faculty—is rarely gifted with the power of analysis, which is essential in every critic, musical or otherwise.

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Frances Saville, who was under contract to the director of the Paris Opera Comique to return to Paris in January,

who have never heard this talented singer and those who have still that pleasure in store.

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Mascagni, the famous composer of "Cavalleria Rusticana," has laid aside five or six unfinished operas in order to assume the directorship of the "Ros-



Jean de Reszke.

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Jean de Reszke 92.

sini" Lyceum, at Pesaro, Italy. He says he will not write for several years to come.

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Lola Beeth, the prominent soprano, is not a German, as some papers persist in saying. She is a Pole by birth and a countrywoman of those illustrious artists, the de Reszkes, Paderewski, and Modjeska.

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Young Josef Hofmann, who scored such a marvellous success in this country eight or nine years ago, gave his first concert in Berlin recently, with great artistic and financial success. It is a pleasure to hear this, as musical prodigies, as a rule, outgrow their pre-

cocious talent. It has been reported a number of times of late that Josef Hofmann was to visit this country again under Henry E. Abbey's management. But it is hardly likely that Mr. Abbey would make the mistake of bringing him over now when Paderewski is worshipped as the piano god.

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Ellen Beach Yaw, the phenomenal young soprano about whom so much has been written both here and abroad, made her début at Carnegie Hall recently. Miss Yaw has a fine and sympathetic voice, but her fame rests less on real ability than her unusual power of being able to reach a higher range than any other living singer.

N. L. H.



Mme. Nordica.

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